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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PA SECURITY COMMANDERS CONCERNED OVER IDF
INCURSIONS

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary. In back-to-back meetings on November 2, PA National Security Forces (NSF) West Bank Commander Major General Thiab Ali (Abu al Fatah) and Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) Chief Major General Hazim Atallah expressed anger and frustration with what they described as un-coordinated Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) incursions into the West Bank. Atallah also reported significant GOI delays and restrictions on the customs processing of equipment donated to Palestinian Security Forces (PASF). Both claimed that the IDF has ramped up incursions in West Bank population centers (i.e., Area A) and expressed concern that PA security efforts are unsustainable in the long term without a change in the current IDF security regime in the West Bank. End Summary.

ABU AL-FATAH: INCURSIONS FREQUENT, UN-COORDINATED

12. (C) In a November 2 meeting at NSF Headquarters in Ramallah, NSF West Bank Commander Abu al Fatah told Post that IDF troops had carried out eleven incursions into Area A (Palestinian population centers where the PA has security and civil responsibility) on October 1, eight of them in daylight, without advance notice to the PA. "They always do it without prior notice," he claimed. "Just as they go in, the (IDF) District Coordination Office calls on the phone, to tell us to take our forces off the streets, and avoid any friction with PASF operating in the area." He stated that in his view, the rise in the level of IDF incursions in the West Bank in recent months was directly related to an "impasse" in PA-GOI relations.

13. (C) Abu al-Fatah claimed to have told IDF area commanders in a recent meeting that while the PA was in compliance with its Roadmap obligations on security, Israel was not. "(They) deal with us as a strong army deals with a weaker army, as if they have the right to enter into our areas without dealing with any other considerations," he told Post. Asked what specific actions the IDF should take, he said, "allow (PA) Security Forces to operate twenty-four hours a day in Area A, as they are supposed to be able to do." Note: Asked if there were any West Bank Area A cities in which PASF were currently allowed by the IDF to operate at night, Abu Fatah said there were not. End Note. When asked how the IDF had responded to his requests, Abu al-Fatah said, "there was sweet talk, they were very positive. But in terms of concrete actions on the ground, nothing."

ATALLAH: IDF ON THE DOORSTEP

14. (C) In a meeting the same day at PCP headquarters, Police Chief Hazim Attalah argued that growing PASF

capabilities had run up against immovable IDF restrictions. "Things are not changing with the Israelis," he said. "They're in almost every city of the West Bank every day, everywhere you look." To illustrate the point, Atallah claimed that twenty minutes before our midday meeting, four IDF jeeps had conducted an incursion in downtown Ramallah, in front of his police headquarters. "I thought they were your (security) advance," he said, adding, "but they were IDF. They don't talk to anyone, they won't tell anyone anything. They just took up a stand, one on each corner, and stayed ten or fifteen minutes. I was praying they would stay, so you could see them."

15. (C) Atallah continued, "how am I supposed to understand this? Ten days ago, (the IDF) conducted a reconnaissance with maps around the (PA) Presidential residence (in Ramallah). I went down and asked them, 'What the hell are you doing?' And they told me, 'Oh, we have a new commander in Ramallah, and he needs to know where it (the Presidential residence) is.'" Atallah alleged that the IDF's motives for continued incursions were political, and not grounded in realistic security concerns. "Israel is playing with fire," he argued, adding that the deadlock in political discussions had created a tense environment in which provocations in key areas such as Jerusalem could trigger broader unrest in the West Bank.

ATALLAH: GOI, HAMAS "PUSHING" PA

16. (C) Atallah argued that the PA was increasingly pinched by opposing forces in its efforts to maintain law and order.

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He argued, "Israel is pushing us in Jerusalem, at the (al-Aqsa) mosque. And Hamas is pushing us from inside the West Bank -- they won't push us from Gaza, because they have an unwritten cease-fire with Israel there -- Hamas is pushing from inside the West Bank because they don't want elections, they don't like what we did with the stupid Goldstone report. Can anyone tell us who the enemy is?"

ATALLAH: LIMITATIONS ON EQUIPMENT FRUSTRATE PASF

17. (C) Atallah noted angrily that his forces' ability to maintain public order was constrained by limitations on what equipment the GOI would clear for import. "Canada donated vests and helmets," he said. "We waited seven months for customs, and when there was no clearance, Canada took them away. The British have been donating the same hand-held radios since 1994. Same model, same company. But now Israel says we cannot have them. Why? The new model has more channels, 14 or 16 instead of eight. Same frequencies as before, that we were allowed at Oslo. So the latest UK donation has been sitting more than nine months in customs. And what good is US or EU pressure? Earlier this year, we saw the whole EU work for seven months -- and they couldn't bring in 900 police helmets."

18. (C) Speaking about recent PASF accomplishments, Atallah became openly emotional. "What we did in the past two years is not easy," he said. "We searched mosques -- ask a Muslim what that means. In Qalqilya, we opened fire and killed Palestinians -- just because they were Hamas." He continued, "We need to feel something, anything that says we are working together (with Israel), that we have the same future, for God's sake. Because I cannot go on this way, with them (IDF) sitting outside my office on their jeeps, on the four corners."

19. (C) Referring both to continued Israeli restrictions on PASF equipment imports, and to what he described as the humiliation of daily IDF incursions into Palestinian population centers, Atallah said: "Let me be honest. I've been here (in his position as PCP Chief) two years, and

everyone knows what I've done. I didn't become a general because I spent ten years in Israeli jails. I became a general because of my training and my qualifications. But I'm fed up. If this continues; I'm going to leave this. And I'm going to go home."

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Abu al-Fatah and Atallah speak, in terms of professional culture, from different ends of the Palestinian security spectrum. Abu al-Fatah is a grizzled and sometimes monosyllabic veteran of the Arafat area who served seven years in prison in Syria, and is known among his colleagues as a "soldier's soldier." Atallah is an urbane, English-speaking graduate of overseas training colleges who identifies with a younger, more technocratic generation of PA security chiefs.

¶11. (C) Our contacts claim that the number of incursions is higher now than at any other point since Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. The extent to which their messages on incursions dovetail, and the emotion with which both spoke about the issue, may be indicative of the extent to which this irritant has become a genuine challenge to the PA's credibility. What these contacts (and we) cannot objectively assess is the degree to which these incursions are driven by legitimate Israeli security concerns that cannot otherwise be addressed by the PASF itself.

RUBINSTEIN